

## Supporting Transitions

### What is a transition?

Daily Transitions	Life Transitions
Changing from one activity or setting to another.	Changing from one stage of life to another.
Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carpet time to table top activity</li> <li>- Classroom to school yard</li> </ul>	Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grade to grade</li> <li>- School to school</li> </ul>

### Why is it important to support transitions?

Transitions are a part of everyday life, children/youth are expected to adjust to changes on a regular basis. Children/youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may find transitions and any changes in environments or routines challenging. Additionally, children/youth with ASD may have difficulty understanding verbal directives, recognizing subtle transition cues, or knowing it's time to move on. This may cause increases in anxiety and challenging behaviours during transitions. Increased planning, preparation and transitional strategies can be effective in increasing predictability and routine, which may decrease transition challenges.

### What can transition support strategies do?

- Reduce the amount of time it takes for a child/youth to transition
- Increase appropriate behaviour during transitions
- Increase child/youth's independence in transitioning
- Increase successful inclusion in the school and community

### What tools are available to aid in transitions?

**Visual Timers:** Timers that allow children/youth to visually see how much time is left of an activity before they move onto the next. Examples include; Time Timers™, hour glasses, egg timer, watches, phone timers, etc.

**Visual Countdowns:** Show a child/youth how much time is left using a style that is meaningful to them. Can be more flexible than timers. Example; countdown boards, stop lights.

**Verbal warnings:** Provides an auditory warning of how much time is left before moving on to the next activity. For example, "5 more minutes and we are moving on to the next activity".

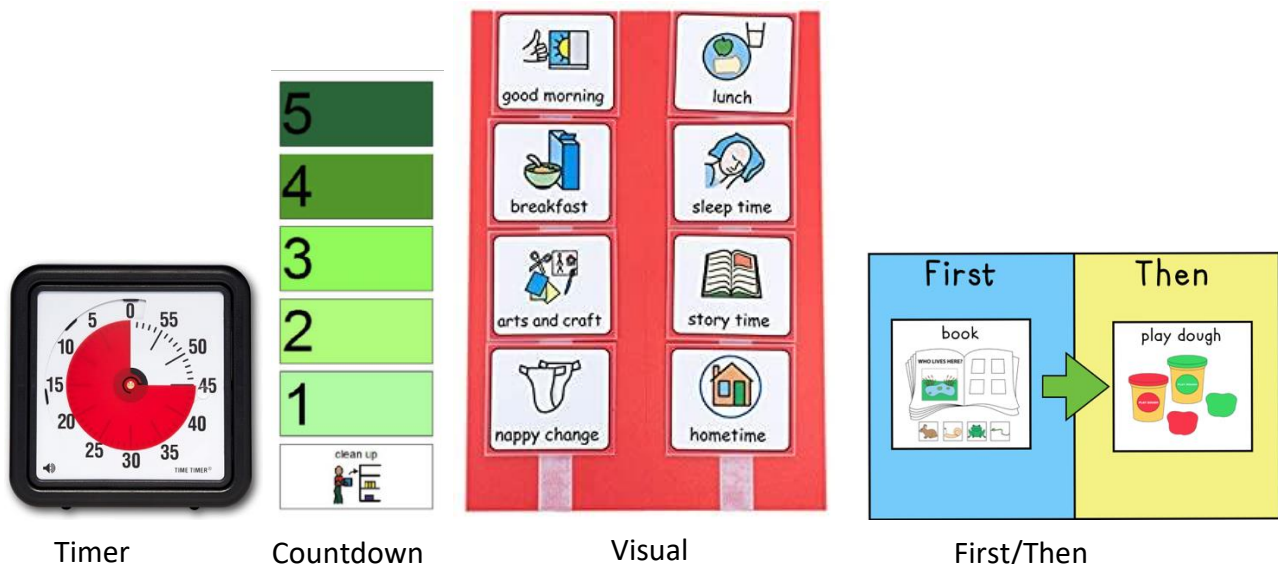
**Schedules:** Show children/youth what is coming next to understand a sequence of activities and increase predictability. Examples; full day routine schedule, activity to activity schedule.

**First/Then:** Show child/youth what the current activity is and what activity is coming up. Can be particularly helpful when the child/youth must complete a non-preferred activity to access a preferred activity. For example, “first finish your tracing then free time”, “first finish 3 math questions then you can play on the computer”.

**Transition Cues:** Any cue or prompt found in the environment that signals a transition is coming. Examples; bell, turning lights on/off, signing a transition song.

**Social Story:** Narratives that describe social situations that are challenging for a child, including transitions. They identify the who, what, where, when and why that might be involved in the scenario, to help explain transitions for that specific child/youth.

## What are some examples of transitional tools?



## Can transition tools be used to improve engagement with less preferred activities?

Yes, transition strategies such as First/Then can be used to set expectations for a child/youth to complete a less preferred activity. Using visuals and planning preferred activities following the completion of less preferred activity, may increase motivation for a child/youth to complete the required activity. Visuals such as a First/Then board may be beneficial in helping the child/youth see what is coming next. For example, “first math problem (less preferred), then gym time (highly preferred).”

## How can I plan for life transitions?

Transition planning should begin well in advance of the expected transition. The plan should be sufficiently detailed and requires communication with all involved parties (teachers, principals, parents, spec ed coordinator). With transitions involve returning/starting school for example, there needs to be communication between the school, educators, relevant community agencies if applicable, and parents/guardians of the child/youth.

Things to consider for moving schools:

1. Begin preparing the child/youth well in advance of expected transition
  - Examples:
    - Use a calendar as a countdown towards the return to school
    - Share pictures and stories about the school
    - Provide details about the return to school, e.g. how they'll be getting there, who their teacher is, what grade they're in, who may be in their class, etc.
    - Show a video about what they may expect in a new grade or what they may be learning about
2. Plan transition steps to allow the child/youth to gradually be familiarized with the change
  - Examples:
    - Schedule visits with the school
    - Help familiarize them with the new environments

### References

Supporting Transitions. (2012). In *ErinOakKids.ca*. Retrieved from <https://www.erinoakkids.ca/ErinoakKids/files/f7/f7301e00-f3d7-42d4-9239-5a1>